

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | CONTACT ROB WRAY | 323.702.4709 | r.wray@thelatrust.org

The L.A. Trust celebrates National Children's Dental Health Month with information campaign

Will distribute thousands of toothbrushes to LAUSD families

LOS ANGELES (February 9, 2021) – The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health will launch a public oral health awareness campaign and distribute 58,000 toothbrushes in observance of National Children's Dental Health Month in February.

"Poor oral health is the number one cause of school absenteeism – and it's entirely preventable," said Maryjane Puffer, executive director of The L.A. Trust. Screenings of 3,399 elementary school students in Los Angeles found that 66% of children had active dental disease, 27% had visible tooth decay and 6% required emergency care.

Puffer said The L.A. Trust is working closely with its partners in the oral health community, including L.A. Unified Student Health and Human Services, LAUSD's Beyond the Bell division, UCLA's More LA Smiles, the L.A. County Department of Public Health and other agencies, foundations and dental care providers. Puffer gave special thanks to Crest, which provided thousands of the toothbrushes being distributed.

Prevention campaign

Los Angeles School Board member Scott Schmerelson took The L.A. Trust's Brushing with Billy campaign direct to kids during a Local District "Twinkle Time" February 3, using the puppet to show young students how to brush, floss and eat right.

"Improving the health and lives of all L.A Unified students and providing access to oral healthcare is a critical element to ensuring student achievement and success. As we celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month, we are grateful for our partnership with The L.A Trust and will continue to support their oral health awareness initiative so our students can stay healthy and benefit from a wealth of resources."

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The L.A. Trust is releasing three oral health videos on social media this month. The “Brushing with Billy” videos feature Program Manager Esther Yopez and a kid-friendly puppet. The spots, which focus on brushing, flossing and healthy eating, have been aired 150 times on KLCS-TV, reaching an estimated viewership of more than 1.1 million.

The L.A. Trust also facilitated the broadcast of UCLA More LA Smiles oral health TV spots starring Sesame Street characters, which will be shown on KLCS remote learning channels through February.

“People don’t understand the disease process when it comes to cavities – it’s insidious,” said Dr. Jim Crall, project director of More LA Smiles. Simple changes in student behavior can make a big difference and education is key, he said.

“Prevention is key to oral health and that includes screenings and education,” Puffer said. “The pandemic has transformed our oral health education activities but not our commitment. We will continue to use every means at our disposal to ensure that kids and teens enjoy the best possible oral health during this pandemic.”

SHHS Organization Facilitator Gloria Velasquez noted that seven Wellness Centers and school-based health clinics are currently providing partial or full oral health services for students and community members: El Sereno Middle School (Western Dental); Hart Street Elementary School (Dr. Samoha); Jefferson Wellness Center (South Central Family Health Center); Maclay and Sun Valley Middle Schools (NEVHC); Monroe (Valley Community Health, appointment only); and Washington Prep Wellness Center (St. John’s Family and Wellness Center). Call ahead for an appointment.

The Los Angeles Trust for Children’s Health is an independent nonprofit agency bridging the worlds of health and education to achieve student wellness. We focus on pressing student health issues, including expanding healthcare access, oral health, mental health, substance use prevention, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, research and student engagement.



Los Angeles School Board Member Scott Schmerelson brought The L.A. Trust’s “Brushing with Billy” campaign to students during a live appearance on the classroom program “Twinkle Time” February 3.